

Questions and answers following a reading from IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS
123 East 63rd Street, New York, N. Y. Tuesday, March 5, 1963

Mr. Nyland - M. Etievant

Mr. Nyland read from Chapter Sixteen, page 320: "Partly in connection with what I have just said..." to page 324: "...a 'hydrogen' without the Holy Ghost."

Dr. Balamuth:
(Herter Group)

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Transcription Room

M. Etievant:

How does one connect this, - the idea of scale as given in our system of ideas, with this diagram of everything living, beyond the mention that was made that angels were thought to be related to planets and archangels to the sun? And I have another question in relation to this: How can I approach the idea of man one, two, three, four, five, and so on, and fit this conception, this idea, into this diagram of everything living?

I would like first to remind us of the sentence that has just been read: It may take us a long time to understand this diagram. It is extremely difficult because we see in it a great number of, apparent, contradictions. You spoke of the idea of scale. But isn't the idea of scale there, just the same? Isn't there, in this idea of relationship between, let's say different classes of beings, isn't this an idea of scale? Of course, it is the sense of the scale itself which is so difficult for us to really grasp. Also what is so difficult to grasp is the movement in that scale, the movements in all directions. As we see that scale, we feel there is a movement, very alive -- there is a life in that scale, of which we understand, in a very small way, the process.

Concerning the classification of man number one, two, three, four and so forth, we have to at once make a distinction between the individual evolution, the evolution of the individual, and the general evolution. It seems to me that in this scale, it is not man number one, two or three which is considered, but a very broad realm of life. One thing I have thought of that maybe will bring something to this -- though of course I would be very prudent again in relation to this: We can consider, for instance, organic life as the whole of it - plants, vertebrates, invertebrates and man, but at the same time we see very well that organic life is extremely complex, and that it is divided into several parts or levels, each part or level having a particular function. For instance, mankind is part of organic life, but mankind as such is also complex.

We know there is one part of mankind which is the evolving part, and a part which may be a medium for the evolving part. Of course, I want to make it very clear that I don't mean to say that hydrogen 96 may mean a certain part of mankind, and hydrogen 24, which man is, may mean another part of mankind. But still, if we consider this idea of levels, and one level maybe being a medium for another level, this idea could be acceptable. There are also many, many ideas which could be brought there - and which definitely could be related to the diagram. For instance, without spending any more time on this subject, - the idea of serving as food: what does it mean to serve as food?

Mrs. Campbell:
(Welch Group I)

What kind of baking will make me a more intelligent potato?

Mr. Nyland:

Of course, there is bound to be a question like that, eh? Are you now referring to the intelligence of a raw potato? Or that you change...

Mrs. Campbell:

No, I am referring-- I see that something is involved here, some process, something which is done to the potato.

Mr. Nyland:

Well, let's say it in ordinary terminology. A baked potato is more digestible for man.

Mrs. Campbell:

No, that's not what I mean. What is necessary on my scale, on my level, in order to be more intelligent? A potato is baked; then what is necessary for me?

Mr. Nyland:

The trouble is that the potato does not bake itself.

Mrs. Campbell:

That's my question. What?

Mr. Nyland:

That is why the example is very bad. You see, we are talking about evolution of man. We are talking about conscious efforts. We are talking about something that each hydrogen, in the regular sense of the word, that is, each representative of a certain being would have to do in order to, let's call it, short cut its evolutionary process. I hope you understand.

This diagram means that there is a balance between involution and evolution. There is constantly something from the top going down and something from the bottom going up which balance each other at any one point of the scale.

It is exactly like a chemical reaction in which two substances are confronted with two other substances. And, in accordance with the different medium in which they find themselves, the conditions, it will determine what kind of reaction will take place between them. The medium can be changed in accordance with certain laws of chemistry. And you can make, let's say, you can heat it up, you can change the solvent, or you can have different kinds of conditions which apply differently to the substance in question. But the sense of an equilibrium means that on one side there are certain substances which are divided in such a way that they can move freely. On the other side are substances that are in equilibrium with the first. That means that at any one time, a certain number of substances move from left to right and another equal quantity, an equivalent quantity, moves from right to left. The equilibrium is made simply because that balances each other.

At the present time, if we look at the cosmic scale, there is something that takes place in ordinary life, in an evolutionary process and also which takes place in an involutionary process. That what is created, what we at the present time call our cosmic figures, whatever they may be, from planets to Earth, down to the moon, simply means that there is a relationship between that what is called here negative absolute as the ultimate and positive absolute as the beginning; that there is also a relationship possible for any one along that scale, that is, any particular place to evolve to the next higher.

And the indication here is that for that it is necessary to feed on certain substances which belong to a higher level, then digesting it at the place wherever it is and, as such, then based on that what one is now, using what one eats, to reach a level of a different kind. If we take man on that basis, there is a possibility of man being unconscious or conscious. When he is unconscious, he belongs to an evolutionary-involutionary process. That is, as a part of mankind he becomes part of involution which is counteracted by evolution. And, over many, many years, certain forms of mankind, most likely then living, would reach a level of the planets. If he is unconscious, man serves for the involutionary process of maintaining the moon which is lower than he is and lower than the Earth.

Against that, there is the possibility of any one man becoming conscious of the possibility for himself to grow if he works. Then, in that man, the same thing takes place what takes place on the cosmic scale in a much larger sense of time.

But this time, when man can become conscious, he speeds up his process of actually reaching a higher level by understanding how to take in food of a higher level, digesting it for himself and replacing that place what he now occupies by something that belongs to a lower level. I hope you understand that.

It is only when man becomes conscious that he becomes aware of the possibility for his growth. And then he can reach, in accordance with this diagram which applies to man as well as to the cosmic scale, he can reach then a level indicated by angels. Ouspensky calls it the planetary level. Naturally it is meant the so-called creature which might live on a planetary level.

As far as man is concerned, it means that in his work on himself, he could develop something that becomes of the same value as a planetary level. It is called by Gurdjieff, Keshdjan body. That he could become an archangel simply means that he has the possibility, if he continues to work, to have a soul which is of a different kind of level than a planetary level.

So, when you ask about the potato, it simply means that the potato happens to have, when it is baked, a little bit more nutritive value for man, and can be used for a man which is on a higher scale as compared to an animal. Therefore it has more intelligence, as it is called. In itself, it does not mean anything at all. If one says: It is a certain level of being which is reached, - that is different. Then one can understand that in feeding on material which is of a higher nature, that I myself also, if I know how to digest it, could become a creature of a similar kind of nature.

When we talk about impressions which are 48, and that 24, 12, 6 and even 3 could be digested by us, it all depends on what we do regarding that possible digestion. If I become aware and awake in the real sense of the word, then I am in such a state that impressions which I receive are digested differently.

So, the potato only goes as far as indicating a certain difference between one and the other in the sense of intelligence. I prefer to call it in the sense of being. And that is as far as the comparison goes. It has nothing to do with work on oneself, or saying that a potato, when it is more baked, is more conscious.

Mr. Canham:
(Fremantle Group II)

I would like to understand something more of the idea of food as used in this diagram; and it comes to the question of : what man, as mentioned here, would feed on invertebrates. It is mentioned earlier in this reading -- it indicates that the possibility of man's evolution is based on the change of quality of man's impressions, and I feel there must be some tie-in here.

M. Etievant:

Still, I would rather follow the advice given in the reading: that we have still to consider this diagram independently, and try to study it and understand it independently. So of course it is not understandable, for me at least, that man feeds on invertebrates. I can only understand that there are certain mediums, certain levels of life. And considered in a certain way, not concretely as such but maybe as a degree of life, or as densities of vibrations. And there is a relationship between these levels, there is an exchange between these levels. I can not say much more. You see there is something very interesting in the idea of food: we see that we have to eat or be eaten. But is that destruction? And we understand that there are many ways to eat or to be eaten. I may be destroyed, or I may be eaten in a different way. As I see it, the expression: I serve as food, is an important idea because there is the idea of a usefulness there. And this idea of serving as food establishes a relationship. I can not be needed as food without there being a possibility for me there too.

Now about the concrete, the actual formulation here, I feel the need not to let myself be shut in there, because I would not be able to understand that way.

Mr. Canham:

No, but we are talking here, if I understand, of a different scale. We are talking about something lower feeding the higher, and the means applied here are not so important. In all these things, I am trying to find where I am in all this - I want to understand more what is my place in this, and I am trying to understand what man is being spoken of here, and what it is that this man being spoken of here derives as food.

M. Etievant:

Yes, but isn't it there that we have to make a distinction between the individual evolution and the general evolution. In fact, your question may raise a point: We don't understand very well the relationship between ourselves as individuals and organic life and mankind and evolution or the general evolution. It is there that there is a question.

I want to find my place, but I have to find it in relation to something, and it is exactly there that my question lies. From the point of view of general evolution I have no place. I am simply a cell in the big organism. From the point of view of individual evolution, I have a different place; or if I understand this relation consciously, already my place is different, - because I bring a meaning to this place or this relationship, I can relate myself to this meaning.

(*)Mr. Campbell:
(Welch Group I)

This reading presents a new conception of intelligence for me. I see that I have always regarded intelligence as a capacity of doing, being able to do something. But here intelligence is presented as a measure of my capacity to have something done to me; just another way around. I see that it is said that intelligence is an aspect of being; but how? How can we understand this in some wider way? It seems not enough to say that it is just being. It is not a synonym. What does it mean?

Mr. Nyland:

Are you stuck on the word, intelligence? When you say intelligence is a capacity to do, is that really what you mean by intelligence? Does it have to be followed by doing? Do you link up intelligence with a mental effort or maybe with a capacity to do physically? Is it really that? Could you see it as a function belonging to being?

Mr. Campbell:

I couldn't say very much more about it than just that sentence. It is more than I want to.

Mr. Nyland:

I want to know what really your concept of intelligence is. For me, it is just a name which indicates a certain degree of being.

Now, if we want to define being, that perhaps would be a little difficult, because being is at a certain level and changes when it goes from one level to another. I think a being is composed, exactly like a hydrogen, of three component parts. A hydrogen, which again is another word you might say for an entity of being, is simply in a state in which it could become active but which is not active; and has in it a capacity of becoming active in accordance with any one of the three components out of which it is formed. Cosmologically- chemically speaking, it is carbon, oxygen and nitrogen. From an ordinary standpoint of man it is intellect, feeling and physique.

So, if I make some distinction there of a degree of intelligence, it is linked up with what I am in any one of the three centers. That would determine the intelligence of myself as a human being

which I call then a being of a certain grade or gradation.

Now, regarding this question of intelligence as if it would mean being eaten, I have exactly the same trouble trying to understand that I eat. I eat in order to maintain myself. And if I stayed at the level of an unconscious being, I take in food and digest it. I use from it whatever I can and I eliminate the rest. And on that basis, the three kinds of food that I take in have the same kind of principle involved. And also, although they are of different levels of being themselves as represented by different numbers of hydrogen, my body is such that it is constituted to digest any one of the three in a certain way, by means of which my body is maintained, and I remain responsible in that sense for the continuation of my life.

I think we must make a very clear distinction between that kind of a man and another kind of a man. It has nothing to do with the difference between man number one, two and three. From the standpoint of consciousness, they are alike, because man number one, two, three are all unconscious except in certain moments of accidental awakening.

If man realizes that there is a possibility for him, as I said a little while ago, to short cut his evolutionary process, and if that is done by means of work on himself, if that is done by trying to become conscious, then he is a different kind of a man, because, instead of being eaten, he starts to eat. And he then wishes to eat that kind of food, towards which, of that kind of a quality towards which he wants to strive. So, instead of feeding his moon, which would be in the direction of Negative Absolute, he tries to strive towards the Positive Absolute. Then his being and his intelligence have taken on an entirely different aspect of wish to live. And, in that sense, he is no longer subject to such laws in which he is.

Where he is at the present time is that square. (indicates diagram) That is where all mankind is. A few of such people, who belong to humanity, get the idea that they would like to evolve a little faster. And for that reason, there are a few who, uncovering a certain way of how to become more conscious, try to work on themselves in trying to become conscious in order to prepare themselves to go up the scale towards what is there called angels and archangels. The horizontal line that is indicated by the three squares is the development of man in this scale.

This scale, although it applies to cosmological relationships, is exactly the same for each individual man, in which he finds himself unconsciously in the state indicated there by the square of man. On the road to his possible conscious development, he will go towards the angel side and will go towards the sun side, that is, the archangel side. This is what man would become if he becomes more intelligent regarding the aim of his existence.

In that sense, this diagram can help to indicate in what direction he should go, because it is there said that he should feed on a different quality of food. If he does not do it, if he remains unconscious, during his life time even, he then will slough off certain material which feeds the moon. That is simply another word for saying that it goes down the scale and it is being used by the beings that are lower than he is. And when he dies, his body also becomes stuff and is used simply for the maintenance of that what is required at the lower end of the scale in the cosmic ray.

But those who wish to become conscious, they have an entirely different attitude, and their direction is going towards the Positive Absolute.

Now I do not know how to relate, if you wish, the question of intelligence in any further way than: I become, if I am interested in evolution, more intelligent than a man who is not interested in evolution and wishes to remain unconscious.

Mr. Campbell:

But you describe what the man eats, and not what he is eaten by.

Mr. Nyland:

If I eat, I will not be eaten. If I eat and I grow, someone else will fill my place and be eaten in my place. This is the difficulty. I will not assume then when I, in the square of man, work on myself, that I will stay there. I have an obligation that if I create a vacuum by moving, that someone else will have to take my place.

But if you look at the totality of organic kingdom as a whole, there are any number of cells, represented by human beings, which will fill my place. It simply means I live, at the present time, a possibility of wanting to become conscious. Therefore, someone else need not live that possibility which I live. But if I did not live it, someone else would live it. If I go over from an unconscious state into a conscious one, someone else will take my place as an unconscious human being.

Organic kingdom is made up of such a variety of all kinds of cells that not every one will become an organ. Thousands and thousands of cells and thousands and thousands of people will remain supporting cells and supporting people. Orage used to say, "We have the possibility, all of us, but the probability is just a few." And that, of course, is true. But I do not care about anyone for whom the possibility never changes into the probability. My concern is if there is a possibility for me to change into the probability of becoming conscious.

So, when I then, in becoming conscious, in trying, I put myself in that kind of a state in which I become aware of myself, in that state I am different. And therefore, the food that I then take in is differently digested and goes to a different place. When I say: I try to make impressions conscious, - it simply means I have to become conscious. That is, I try. When I am, at such a moment, aware of myself, then whatever impressions I take in, although the hydrogen may be 48, will be 24 or 12 or perhaps higher, dependent entirely on the state in which I am. And not only that; when I am aware and really awake in the proper sense of the word, then when I breathe air, I extract from air more than what I now extract, which is only a little bit of oxygen. I can extract, at a certain time, certain rarified gasses which are food. And the third, when I take in ordinary food when I am in a conscious state, if I even could maintain it, even for a little while, that what digests of my ordinary food, digests to a much higher scale in my physical body.

So there are definitely three different reasons why it would be advantageous for anyone to try to become conscious regarding food. When this process takes place, I am not eaten. I eat. And I have nothing further to do with anything that is below me than only the gratefulness that I stand on a certain platform which has been made evolutionarily for me to find myself and the place where I am. In that sense I pay respect to everything that has made me what I am. In exactly the same way as I am now whatever my life has been up to the present moment. To say it again in other words, the present is a combination of the past. And if I look towards the Absolute, I am interested in the future and possible development.

Miss Elenz:
(Benson Group I)

Since impressions are my great hope, how can I understand the statement that was made, that impressions are not subject to cosmic law? What laws, then, would they be subject to, and what would be my relationship to that?

M. Etievant:

This statement, it seems to me, has to be taken very simply. Impressions are not subject to the cosmic laws on that given level. The cosmic laws, at this level at which we take food and breathe, are so that it is impossible to eat another food than hydrogen 768 and impossible to breathe anything else than hydrogen 192. But these laws that restrict these foods do not restrict the taking of impressions. Everything is subject to laws, but to these laws the impressions are not subjected. I think that has to be taken in a simple way.

Mr. Eichler:
(Sutta Group II)

Could you speak about the connection that death has to do with feeding? It seems that man feeds the archangels. And it would seem that man, humanity, at the present time, feeds in this manner at the time of physical death. Yet you have spoken of the need to become conscious in order to die. Is that connected with fulfilling this obligation in a different way?

Mr. Nyland:

Does man become conscious in order to die? Or is it that man has to die in order to become conscious?

Mr. Eichler:

Well, it stated: one must wake up.

Mr. Nyland:

True.

Mr. Eichler:

And stay awake, and then die.

Mr. Nyland:

So? Die what? What dies in a man? In that sense, if one wakes up, what dies?

Mr. Eichler:

The part that cannot wake up.

Mr. Nyland:

The part that is not needed.

I do not, of course, know how you understand this particular kind of process. When I wake up, that is, when I make an attempt to become more awake than I am, aware of myself as I am, I say, when I try to become more conscious, or rather that I try to introduce in my life something that is comparable to light. If I assume that what I am doing now is living in darkness; rather, I say, sometimes I do as if I am a machine, as if I am automatic, as if I am a chicken without a head. Many of these statements make me realize that, at times, really I am not awake at all.

And if I try to become aware of myself by fulfilling the necessities and the requirements for that kind of an activity, which simply means I have to become aware, that is, observing with a certain part of myself which I can call splitting off, which then becomes present to myself continuing to function, that at that time, that that what becomes aware of myself, also introduces an impartiality regarding that what it sees; and also that at that time and the moment when it happens, I am aware then and not before and not after.

So it implies quite a bit. Therefore, this road of consciousness is not only not easy, but it is something that if I could actually experience it and maintain it, then certain things of my ordinary life will become apparently not quite useful for that purpose.

Now, when I try to become awake, aware of myself as I am, let's call it principally physically, I surely will notice that there are things that are quite unnecessary as far as my physical behaviour is concerned. If, either under the influence of seeing it they disappear, or that perhaps I lose interest in them. I do not want to say that I force them to change, because that would indicate partiality, so I cannot use that kind of a word.

In any event, the result of working, the result of becoming aware of myself, means that there are certain things that I lose interest in, and I can very well live without them. Regarding such forms of behaviour, they die. They wither on the vine, as it were. And I find myself in a more conscious state, not only more awake, but much more alert regarding that what I have to do in life, without being cluttered up as much.

That I call a process of becoming more alive, out of a state in which I then would compare myself as being more dead. In that way, I die to myself in order to live. But that what I die to is not the same as that what is alive.

When I spoke about the separation, I definitely have in mind something that is, as it were, separated, even if, for the time being, I have to assume that it is as if separated. There are two quite definite functions which are then taking place. One is in my mind and part in my heart, becoming aware of the other part of me which is my former self functioning. And therefore when I say, I am awake, - that what is awake is a very small part and perhaps the beginning of an I, as a different form of life for me, as compared to the present state of my unawareness..

And it is not so much that I split this idea of life into two, but I provide a different kind of vehicle or a different kind of edifice, a different kind of mansion, a different house. And it is there that I, really myself, would like to live and to look at that what is my functioning as a servant instead of being a slave to it.

So, in that way, it is not at all a question of dying altogether. It is a question of only sloughing off that what gradually ought to disappear and perhaps will disappear entirely when I die physically.

But the whole idea of the fulfillment of an octave in oneself, Do Re Mi Fa Sol La Si; I am full-grown as far as up to Si is concerned as I consider my physical body. And that the Si Do is really the last remnant of what ties me to Earth. So that if I, because of becoming conscious, could loosen the relationship between Si and Do of that octave, I will then, at that moment that I do die, not have any difficulty of leaving my body simply because I am not living there any longer. I am living in another part which Gurdjieff calls, as I said before, Kesdjan body.

The whole idea is that one lives in ordinary life as if, in the first place one lives in a spiritual life; and gradually lives in spiritual life as if one lives in ordinary life. The process of being awake and awakening and remaining and trying to maintain a certain state of conscience and consciousness simply means that I have, although interest in my ordinary life, it is now being used for the purpose of stepping higher towards the level of the planets or the level of the angels.

Angels are not conscious man. I remain a man. For that, I have to work. An angel probably does not have to work. It is there. The word angel is wrongly chosen, but it does not matter very much if we know what is meant.

We try to live as if we are on a level belonging to the planets, and in trying to live as if and in fulfilling the requirements of how to become aware, gradually I will live there; and I will look down on earth, not even realizing that I used to live there.

The second step of that were possible and is possible for man, to live in his soul or to make a soul. It would be the simple step from the planets to the sun. Maybe within the limits of our solar system, that might be possible for man.

So that man number one, two and three represents his earthly existence. Four and five might represent his Kesdjan body. Six and seven might represent his soul.

Mr. Labella:
(Pentland Men's Group)

In looking at this diagram, - the square, the eternal unchanging, - I get the impression that it is moving. I don't get this with any of the other squares. It gives the impression that about the center something is revolving. And it seems to me to be a clue about the process of movement for the rest of this diagram.

M. Etievant:

Yes, But I think it is still much more difficult than that. How can we speak, really, about precisely this square?

Mr. Labella:

I wanted to come down to the point of myself in relationship to this kind of simple movement; it seems simple.

M. Etievant:

Yes, it seems to me it is very true. Everything is in motion. Everything moves. But at the same time there is an Eternal Unchanging. And how is this movement understandable if there is not this eternal unchanging? But there we don't know. And maybe it is right to finish on a question, in this respect.

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